

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Gibbons, J. Whitfield, Susan S. Novak, and Carl H. Ernst. 1988. *Chelydra serpentina*.

***Chelydra serpentina* (Linnaeus)**
Snapping Turtle

Testudo serpentina Linnaeus, 1758:199. Type-locality, "Habitat in caldis regionibus"; restricted to "New Orleans, La." by Smith and Taylor, 1950:21, and "to vicinity of New York City," New York, by Schmidt, 1953:86. Holotype, possibly formerly in Museum Regis Adolphi Friderici, Stockholm, now missing (Andersson, 1900: 23).

Testudo serpentaria: Wiedemann, 1802:191. Nomen novum for *Testudo serpentina* Linnaeus, 1758:199.

Chelydra serpentina: Schweigger, 1812:292. First use of present combination.

Chelydra lacertina Schweigger, 1812:293. Type-locality, unknown; designated as "vicinity of New York City, New York," by Schmidt, 1953:86. Holotype, Mus. Nat. His. Natur., Paris 9580, stuffed adult (R. Bour, in litt.), collector and date unknown (not examined by authors).

Emys serpentina: Merrem, 1820:23.

Ophiocbelone serpentina: Jarocki, 1822:21.

Chelonura serpentina: Fleming, 1822:268.

Rapara serpentina: Gray, 1825:210.

Sauvobelys serpentina: Berthold, 1827:90.

Emys (Chelydra) serpentina: Gray, 1831a:14.

Testudo longicauda Gray, 1831a:36. Nomen nudum, inaccurately accredited to Shaw, 1802.

Testudo serrata Gray, 1831b:36. Nomen nudum, inaccurately accredited to Pennant, 1787.

Chelidra serpentina: Bonaparte, 1831:68. Lapsus calami.

Cheliurus serpentina: Rafinesque, 1832:64.

Emysaurus serpentina: Duméril and Bibron, 1835:350.

Hydraspis (Chelydra) serpentina: Fitzinger, 1835:125.

Emysaurus serpentinus: Agassiz, 1857:417.

Chelydra emarginata: Agassiz, 1857:413. Type-locality, Mobile, [Alabama] and New Orleans [Louisiana], restricted to "Mobile," Alabama, by Schmidt 1953:86. Syntypes, not listed, originally in the Museum of Comparative Zoology.

Chelbydra serpentina: Huber, 1896:424. Lapsus calmi.

Devisia mytobodes Ogilby, 1905:11. Type-locality, "Fly River, British New Guinea." Holotype, Queensland Mus. J20207, stuffed juvenile, collector and date unknown (not examined by authors).

Chlydra serpentina: Daniel, 1984:40. Lapsus calami.

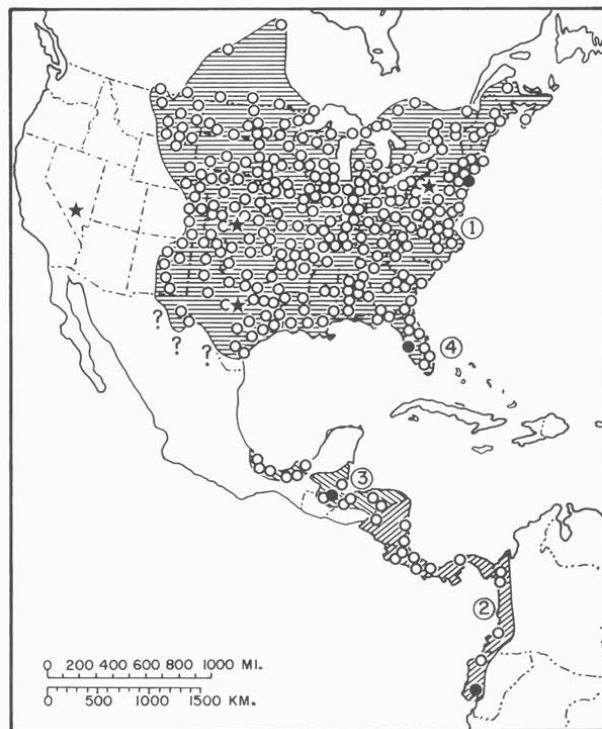
• **Content.** Four subspecies are recognized; *Chelydra serpentina serpentina*, *C. s. acutirostris*, *C. s. rossignonii*, and *C. s. osceola*.

• **Definition.** See generic account.

• **Descriptions.** General descriptions are in Carr (1952), Ernst and Barbour (1972), Conant (1975) and Pritchard (1979). Eggs and embryos were described by Agassiz (1957), Edgren (1949), Packard (1980), Packard et al. (1984), Congdon and Gibbons (1985), and Hotaling et al. (1985).

• **Illustrations.** Color illustrations of juveniles and adults are in Ernst and Barbour (1972), Conant (1975) and Pritchard (1979); black and white illustrations are in Carr (1952), and the above. Other illustrations: adult and young: Zuurmond and Netten (1983); eggs and embryos (Agassiz, 1857); penis (Zug, 1966).

• **Distribution.** Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, southern Quebec and southern Alberta southward east of the Rocky Mountains to Florida and the Texas coast, south from Veracruz, México through Central America to western Ecuador.



Map. Solid circles mark type-localities; hollow circles indicate other records. Stars indicate fossil localities. Question marks indicate no precise limits known.

• **Fossil Record.** See generic account.

• **Pertinent Literature.** General accounts: Carr (1952), Ernst and Barbour (1972), Pritchard (1979), Zuurmond and Netten (1983). Behavioral and ecological papers prior to 1972 are summarized in Ernst and Barbour (1972); others are Obbard and Brooks (1979, 1981a), Christiansen and Burken (1979), Froese (1978), Wilhoft et al. (1979), White and Murphy (1973), Stone et al. (1980), Froese and Burghardt (1975), Major (1975); Reproduction: Froese and Burghardt (1974), Yntema (1978); Obbard and Brooks (1980), Gibbons and Nelson (1978), White and Murphy (1973), Cyrus et al. (1978), Lewis et al. (1979); Physiology: Schuett and Gatten (1980), Packard et al. (1981), Bartlett (1978); Parasitological references are summarized in Ernst and Ernst (1977, 1979); Taxonomy: Babcock (1932), Wermuth and Mertens (1961). For other topics, see generic account.

• **Etymology.** The feminine Latin specific name *serpentina* means serpent-like. Subspecific names are derived as follows: *acutirostris*, from the feminine Latin *acuta*, sharp, and the Latin *rostrum*, beak or snout, referring to the projecting nose; *rossignonii*, is for Jules Rossignon, an early collector in México and Central America; and *osceola*, is for Osceola, Florida.

1. *Chelydra serpentina serpentina* (Linnaeus)

Testudo serpentina Linnaeus, 1758:199. See species synonymy.

Testudo serpentaria: Wiedemann, 1802:191. See species synonymy.

Chelydra serpentina: Schweigger, 1812:292.

Chelydra lacertina Schweigger, 1812:293. See species synonymy.

Emys serpentina: Merrem, 1820:23.

Ophiocbelone serpentina: Jarocki, 1822:21.

Chelonura serpentina: Fleming, 1822:268.

Rapara serpentina: Gray, 1825:210.

Sauvobelys serpentina: Berthold, 1827:90.

Emys (Chelydra) serpentina: Gray, 1831a:14.

Testudo longicauda: Gray, 1831b:36. See species synonymy.

Testudo serrata Gray, 1831b:36. See species synonymy.
Chelydra serpentina: Bonaparte, 1831:68.
Chelinurus serpentina: Rafinesque, 1832:64.
Emysaura serpentina: Duméril and Bibron, 1835:350.
Hydraspis (Chelydra) serpentina: Fitzinger, 1835:125.
Emysaurus serpentinus, Agassiz, 1857:417.
Chelydra emarginata Agassiz, 1857:417. See species synonymy.
Chelydra serpentina: Huber, 1896:424.
Devisia mylbodes Ogilby, 1905:11. See species synonymy.
Chelydra serpentina serpentina: Stejneger, 1918:4. First use of present combination.
Chelydra serpentina lacertina: Stejneger, 1914:4.

• **Definition.** Length of plastral forelobe from level of hyo-hyoplastral suture to anterior tip < 40% of carapace length; anterior width of 3rd vertebral scute < height of 2nd pleural scute; dorsal surface of neck with rounded tubercles.

2. *Chelydra serpentina acutirostris* Peters

Chelydra serpentina var. *acutirostris* Peters, 1862:627. Type-locality, "Guayaquil," Ecuador. Holotype, Zoologisches-Museum, Berlin 4500, juvenile in alcohol, collected by C. Reiss (not examined by authors).
Chelydra acutirostris: Babcock, 1932:874.
Chelydra serpentina acutirostris: Müller, 1939:98. First use of present combination.
Chelydra angustirostris: Dunn, 1945:316. Ex errore.

• **Definition.** Length of plastral forelobe usually > 40% of carapace length; anterior width of 3rd vertebral < 25% of carapace width; dorsal surface of neck with low, round tubercles.

• **Remarks.** This turtle is provisionally listed as a subspecies, but due to its allopatry may prove to merit full specific status.

3. *Chelydra serpentina rossignonii* (Bocourt)

Emysaurus rossignonii Bocourt, 1868:21. Type-locality, "proviennent des marais de Pansos, près le Rio Polochic (Guatemala)." Syntypes, Mus. Nat. Hist. Natur., Paris 1501, 1051A, two juveniles, collector and date unknown (not examined by authors).
Chelydra serpentina var. *mexicanae* Gray, 1870:64. Nomen nudum, inaccurately accredited to Cope, 1865.
Chelydra rossignonii: Cope, 1872:23.
Chelydra rossignoni: Günther, 1885:10. Emendation.
Chelydra serpentina rossignonii: Mertens, Müller, and Rust, 1934:59. First use of present combination.

• **Definition.** Length of the plastral forelobe usually < 40% of carapace length; anterior width of 3rd vertebral > 25% of carapace width; dorsal surface of neck with pointed tubercles.

4. *Chelydra serpentina osceola* Stejneger

Chelydra osceola Stejneger, 1918:89. Type-locality, "Clearwater, Pinellas County, Florida." Holotype, U.S. Nat. Mus. 10369, alcoholic adult male, collected September 1879 by S. T. Walker (examined by authors).
Chelydra serpentina osceola: Mertens, Müller, and Rust, 1934:59. First use of present combination.

• **Definition.** Plastral forelobe usually < 40% of carapace length; anterior width of 3rd vertebral = or > than height of 2nd pleural; dorsal surface of neck with pointed tubercles.

• **Remarks.** The fossil species *Chelydra laticarinata* and *C. sculpta* described by Hay (1916) from a Florida Pleistocene deposit may prove to be *C. s. osceola*. If so, even though these names have priority, we feel *osceola* should be conserved as the subspecification due to common usage.

Richmond (1958) thought sufficient morphological differences ex-

isted to retain *osceola* as a species, and Ernst and Barbour (1972) concurred. However, Feuer (1971) retained it as a subspecies on the basis of seven supposed intergrades with *C. s. serpentina* from the Okefenokee swamp. Obviously its status needs clarification.

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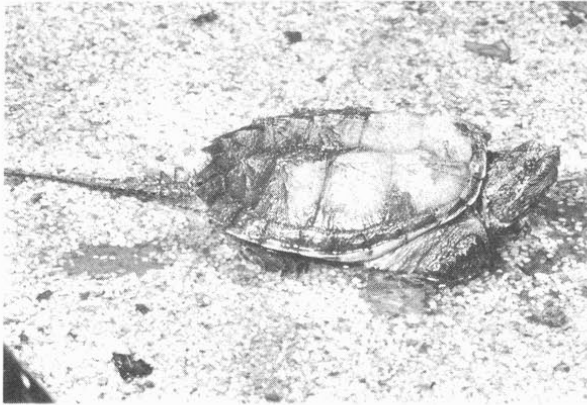


Figure 1. *Chelydra serpentina*, dorsolateral view.

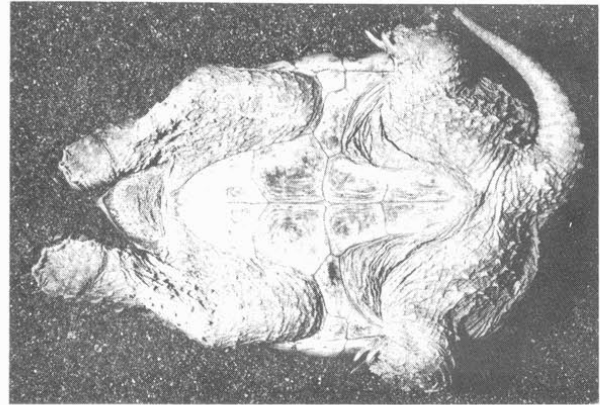


Figure 2. *Chelydra serpentina*, ventral view.

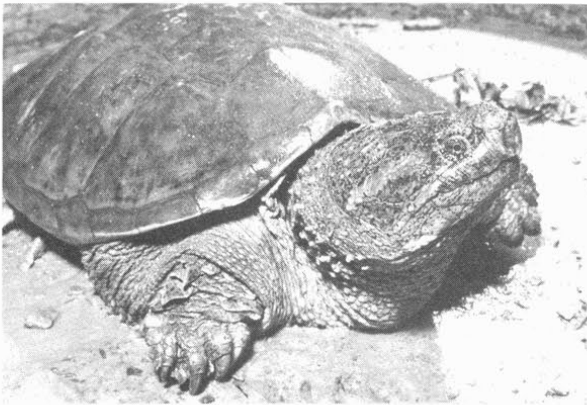


Figure 3. *Chelydra serpentina*, anterolateral view.

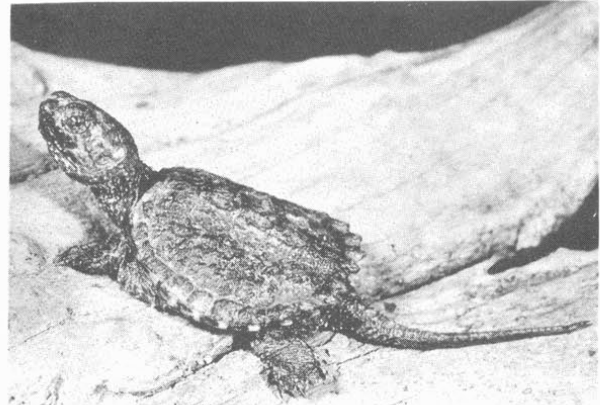


Figure 4. *Chelydra serpentina*, hatchling. (All photographs by Roger W. Barbour).

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